

# A YOUTH LED SOCIAL MARKETING APPROACH TO ENCOURAGE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES



Research Centre



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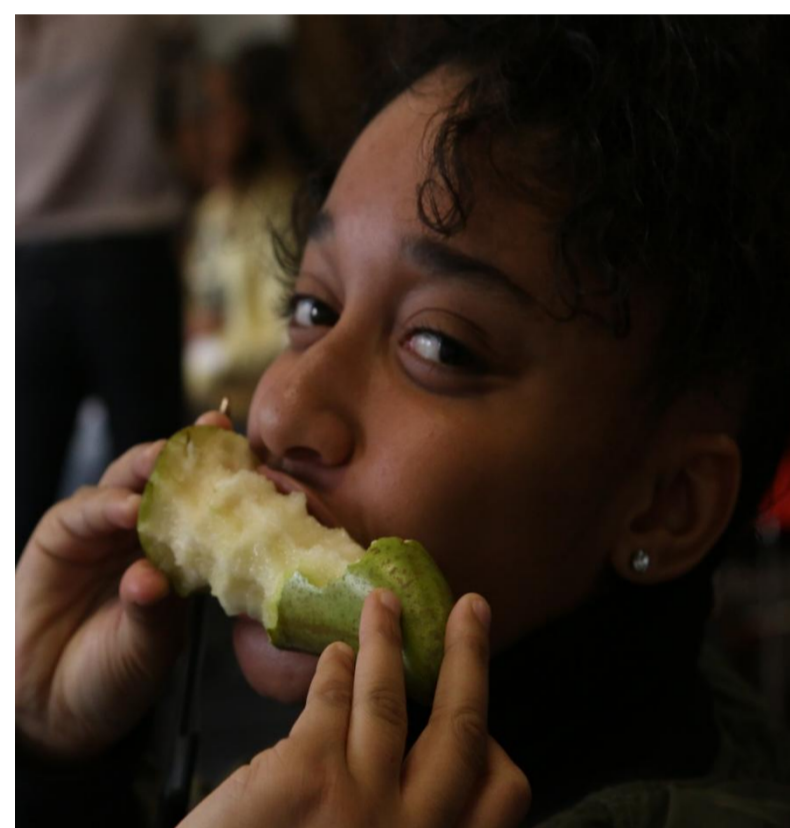
Working with children, for children

## Background

Research has shown that 22 million children in the EU are overweight or obese. It is a significant public health challenge and health inequality for all countries represented in the EYTO partnership affecting one in three children in the UK, half of children and young people in Portugal and Spain and a third in the Czech Republic. (World Obesity Federation, 2013). Young people from low income groups are particularly at risk (Reilly, 2009). The teenage years provide a vital window of opportunity however there is a lack of targeted approaches to tackle the complex issues that adolescents face. Whilst youth-led social marketing campaigns have been successfully developed on other health topics, the potential to use this technique to tackle obesity has yet to be realised. Therefore, **EYTO was designed to support groups of 13-18 year olds living in disadvantaged communities across Europe to research, design and launch new social marketing campaigns to promote healthy eating and physical activity amongst their peers.** The project provided support to young people across the partnership to connect with one another, promoting cross cultural learning, and the development of tools and resources to replicate the EYTO approach.

**I have always thought about healthy lifestyles only in one way – how to lose weight. Now I see that it's more complex. It's also about your motivation, about your emotions and your whole life.**

EYTO Young Campaign Creator



## The EYTO project method

The EYTO project was led by National Children Bureau's (NCB) Health and Social Care team in the UK, and delivered in partnership with three other organisations in Spain, Portugal and the Czech Republic. EYTO consisted of the following aspects:

- Reviewing learning from effective social marketing interventions to tackle childhood and youth obesity.
- Recruiting and supporting a network of young volunteers or 'Campaign Creators' across the participating countries to develop social marketing campaigns in a range of settings within their local communities to promote healthy lifestyles amongst their peers vulnerable to obesity.
- Providing support to the young people across the partnership to share learning and ideas
- Promoting cross cultural learning, campaign messages, and associated resources across Europe

## Evaluation methodology

An evaluation of the EYTO project was run by the NCB Research Centre, across the four participating countries, throughout the project which ran from 2013-15. The methodology used in the final evaluation is depicted below in Table 1. This methodology was used to assess how far healthy eating and physical activity was promoted amongst children and young people.

Table 1: Evaluation methodology

EYTO Project	Method	N
Campaign Creators	Focus groups and activities	Total 12 focus groups (3 in each country)
Stakeholders	Interviews	22
Young people engaging with the project	Survey	237
Activity monitoring	Analysis of activities	

**It's definitely more effective if something is told by your peer, rather than from somebody older...because your peer understands you the most.**

EYTO Young Campaign Creator

## Key evaluation findings and discussion

### ACTIVITIES

- 9,503 individuals engaged with paper-based activities.
- 4,336 individuals engaged with face to face events.
- 2,984 individuals engaged with web-based activities.
- 16,823 young people engaged in total across 4 countries.

### CAMPAIGN CREATORS FOCUS GROUPS

- Positive and inspirational messages promote healthy lifestyles.
- Developed skills, knowledge and confidence.
- Positive emotions and motivation change behaviour.

### STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

- Youth-led approach helped to shape the provision of relevant and accessible information.
- To make healthy choices children and young people require accessible choices.
- Obesity can only be addressed through collaborative and holistic approaches.

### SURVEY

- Causes of obesity associated with eating (48.6%) and not enough physical activities (33%).
- 89.9% of respondents rated campaigns as somewhat or very effective in encouraging them to eat a healthier diet and be more active.

## What made EYTO effective in engaging with and supporting children and young people on the topic of obesity?

- Youth-led and peer to peer approach gave young people greater control to provide reliable, relevant and accessible information.
- Capabilities development of young volunteers so that they were better prepared to make decisions and take the lead.
- Raised awareness of obesity and increased motivation for healthy eating and undertaking physical activities.
- Provided experiences different from audiences habits.

## Long term sustainable changes to behaviour, requires multi-disciplinary collaborative working with young people, parents and professionals in the community through:

- Positive and inspirational messaging and provision of relevant and reliable information;
- Provision of accessible options for making healthy choices
- Effective targeting of vulnerable groups
- A youth-led and peer-to-peer approach, which adopts a holistic method
- A family model approach, building the capacity of parents
- Use of robust and standardised recording tools.

